
1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EIR

INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) as amended. The City of Rocklin is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed Vista Oaks Subdivision and the proposed Highland Parcel A Subdivision (proposed projects) evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the projects. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of the proposed projects, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable and feasible alternatives to the projects that may further reduce the significant effects. The public agency shall consider the information in this EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency prior to making a decision on the approval of the projects.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The proposed Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A Subdivisions were previously analyzed by the City of Rocklin in separate environmental documents. A Draft EIR was prepared for the proposed Vista Oaks subdivision in August 2003, and an Initial Study was prepared for the proposed Highlands Parcel A subdivision in September 2003. Neither of these documents were certified.

Since the preparation of the 2003 CEQA documents, the City has decided to evaluate both proposed projects in one Draft EIR. The current proposed projects are described in detail in Chapter 3 of this Draft EIR, Project Description.

PURPOSE OF THE EIR

As provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency also has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues.

The EIR is an informational document that informs decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must identify possible means to minimize the significant effects and describe a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the project(s). The lead agency, which for these projects is the City of Rocklin, is required to consider the information in the EIR along with any other available information in making its decision. The basic

requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

EIR PROCESS

This Draft EIR represents one component of the EIR process. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared by the City of Rocklin for the proposed projects and circulated for a 30-day public review period from December 17, 2004 to January 18, 2005 (see Appendix A). A public agency scoping meeting to discuss the scope of the Draft EIR was also conducted at Rocklin City Council Chambers on January 4, 2005. Comments received by the City from the public and private agencies in response to the Notice of Preparation are included in Appendix B and summarized later in this chapter.

LEAD AGENCY

The City of Rocklin is the lead agency under CEQA for the preparation of this EIR. Public Resources Code Section 21067 defines the lead agency as “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment.”

SCOPE OF THE EIR

Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, the scope of this EIR includes specific issues and concerns identified as potentially significant. Furthermore, CEQA Guidelines Section 15120 determines that:

the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

The City of Rocklin determined that the preparation of an EIR was appropriate because potentially significant environmental impacts could be caused by implementing the proposed projects. These potential impacts include the grading of the hillsides, the removal of existing oak trees, the displacement of certain biological species, and the negative effect on air quality. This Draft EIR also evaluates the existing environmental resources in the vicinity of the project sites, analyzes potential impacts to those resources resulting from implementation of the proposed projects, and identifies mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce the magnitude of those impacts. Included among these potential impacts are the alteration of scenic vistas as seen from outside the project sites, the reduction of water quality in areas downstream, and the contribution to cumulative impacts on air quality and traffic in the surrounding region. Through the Initial Study, resources identified for analysis in this Draft EIR include:

- land use;
- aesthetics;
- hydrology and water quality;
- geology;
- biological resources;
- transportation and circulation;
- air quality;
- noise; and
- cultural resources.

Other environmental issues, summarized in section 4.1, were determined in the Initial Study to result in no impact or a less-than-significant impact with the incorporation of mitigation measures. These issues include agricultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, mineral resources, population and housing, recreation, utilities and service systems, and public services. The complete text of the Initial Study is contained in Appendix C.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The following summarizes a list of letters received:

- Dana E. Gravett, *Resident*
- Department of California Highway Patrol, Rick Ward, Captain, *Commander-Auburn Area*
- Department of Water Resources, State of California, DeeDee Jones, Chair, *Environmental Review Committee*
- Dry Creek Conservancy, Gregg Bates
- Jeff Kuypers, *Resident*
- John Panek, *Resident*
- Karen Stafford, *Resident*
- Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, Barbara Washburn, Ph.D., *Aquatic Toxicologist*
- Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse, Scott Morgan, *Associate Planner*
- Placer County Department of Public Works, Rebecca Bond, P.E., *Associate Civil Engineer*
- Randall Baker, *Resident*
- Richard Knecht, *Resident*
- South Placer Municipal Utility District, Richard R. Stein, *Project Administrator*
- United Auburn Indian Community, Greg Baker, *Tribal Administrator*

Based on the comments received, the City has identified certain areas of controversy and has listed them here pursuant to the requirements of section 15123(a)(3) of the CEQA

Guidelines. The list summarizes the concerns identified in these letters, categorizing them by issue:

<p style="text-align: center;">Hydrology and Water Quality (Draft EIR Chapter 4.4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality, drainage, erosion, and flood impacts; • Recommended review of local detention needs by Placer County Flood Control District; • Impacts of project-related rise in creek water level behind homes at 6225-6310 Rustic Hills Drive; • State Reclamation Board permit required.
<p style="text-align: center;">Biological Resources (Draft EIR Chapter 4.6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to sensitive-status species, habitats, and/or corridors; • Impacts to riparian habitat south of Secret Ravine Creek; • Impacts to productive fall-run chinook salmon and steelhead trout spawning areas; • Project-related sedimentation impacts to salmonid habitat; • Impacts to an existing freshwater seep in Secret Ravine; • Effects of project-associated lighting and fencing, and increased human presence, on wildlife; • Effects of increased vehicle access and use in and around the creek; • Cumulative impacts to Secret Ravine Creek riparian corridor; • Possibility of establishing a 250-foot riparian buffer around Secret Ravine Creek; • Obstruction or contamination of Secret Ravine Creek; • Impacts related to the proposed bridge; • DFG/NMFS approval of any creek crossing(s); • Prohibition of creek crossings built specifically for construction “or post-construction”; • Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement; • Timing and type of restoration of disturbed areas; • Establishment of monitoring program; • Replacement of trees removed as a result of the projects; • Ensure monitoring and compliance with tree preservation and creek protection measures, in light of improper tree removals that occurred at Granite Lakes Estates.
<p style="text-align: center;">Transportation and Circulation (Draft EIR Chapter 4.7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project trip generation; • Method of traffic analysis; • Levels of service for freeways, ramps, and associated

	<p>intersections;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate emergency vehicle access; • Recommendation to use CHP resources to ensure public safety during project construction.
Air Quality (Draft EIR Chapter 4.8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction emission and dust impacts; • Long-term operational emissions; • Air quality health effects; • Consider the planned subdivisions indirect sources of air pollution.
Noise (Draft EIR Chapter 4.9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased noise levels across I-80 resulting from the proposed sound wall; • Increased noise levels to existing homes on Creekview Ct. (east of project sites) due to reflected freeway noise from proposed sound wall; • Ensure sound wall is completed prior to beginning of construction; • Developers should have to install sound walls on both sides of I-80.
Cultural Resources (Draft EIR Chapter 4.10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential disturbance of known historic and prehistoric resources in the project vicinity.
Alternatives (Draft EIR Chapter 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of potential alternatives which could result in fewer biological impacts; • Evaluate alternative densities.
Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Draft EIR Appendix C).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address fire hazard issues in the Open Space Management Plan.
Utilities (Draft EIR Appendix C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of on-site and off-site facilities; • Potential conflict with proposed trunk sewer line alignment through the project sites, across Secret Ravine Creek, and along the proposed trail alignment • Potential inability to provide sewer service to the project sites; • Wastewater treatment plant capacity concerns; and • Uphold “original plan” that ensured bridge and other infrastructure improvements be made prior to any construction.
Recreation (Draft EIR Appendix C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for public input into the passive park.
Miscellaneous (addressed throughout Draft EIR Chapters 1, 2, 3,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep nearby residents informed and involve them in the project planning process; • Produce one EIR for each project as well as a cumulative EIR that evaluates the impacts of both

and 5)	<p>projects combined;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an alternative that does not have significant impacts in each EIR; • Environmental effects of changes in housing density and location from previous project proposal; • Address impacts of previous developments in the area; • Describe planned roadway and drainage improvements to China Garden Road, including landscaping and property line fencing, and associated impacts to nearby residents; • Utilize granite pit basins for “educational” purposes instead of for catch basins; • Use the opportunity to provide a greenbelt for Rocklin while protecting Secret Ravine Creek.
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ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into the following sections:

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Scope of EIR

Provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the EIR and the review and certification process.

Chapter 2 – Executive Summary

Summarizes the elements of the proposed projects and the environmental impacts that would result from project implementation, describes proposed mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. Acknowledges alternatives that would reduce or avoid significant impacts.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

Provides a detailed description of the proposed projects, including their locations, background information, major objectives, and technical characteristics.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Assessment

Contains a project-specific analysis of environmental issue areas. The subsection for each environmental issue contains an introduction and description of the setting of the project sites, identifies project-specific impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures. Mitigation measures that apply to the projects are included.

Chapter 5 – Statutorily Required Sections

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed projects, including a summary of cumulative impacts, potential growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible changes to the environment.

Chapter 6 – Alternatives Analysis

Describes the alternatives to the proposed projects and their respective environmental effects.

Chapter 7 – EIR Authors / Persons Consulted

Lists report authors and persons who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the EIR.

Chapter 8 – References

Provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

Appendices

Includes the NOP, responses to the NOP, the Initial Study and additional technical information. Appendices are included in both Volumes I and II of this Draft EIR.